

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 HA-05 ICA-11 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 PA-01 BIB-01 SP-02 H-01
/064 W
-----051940 081741Z /43

R 071027Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2751

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: SREF TH
SUBJECT: RTG TEMPORARILY CLOSES REFUGEE CAMPS TO NEWSMEN

1. IN COURSE OF ROUTINELY REQUESTING ACCESS TO REFUGEE CAMPS, NEWSWEEK HONG KONG BUREAU CHIEF HOLGER JENSEN AND BANGKOK STRINGER DAVID HATCHER WERE INFORMED THAT CAMPS WOULD BE CLOSED TO NEWSMEN FOR INDEFINITE PERIOD.

2. EMBOFF QUERIED MFA OFFICIAL REGARDING INCIDENT AND WAS INFORMED THAT RTG HAD CLOSED CAMPS PENDING REVIEW OF POLICY OF PRESS ACCESS. UNTIL NEW REGULATIONS COULD BE ISSUED, JOURNALISTS WOULD BE BARRED FOR "TWO OR THREE WEEKS," ACCORDING TO THIS OFFICIAL. EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT AMERICAN PRESS WAS PLAYING VITAL ROLE IN INCREASING AWARENESS OF REFUGEE SITUATION AND THAT AMERICAN PRESS ACCESS TO CAMPS COULD HELP THAILAND BY MAKING ACCEPTANCE OF GREATER NUMBER OF REFUGEES MORE LIKELY. MFA OFFICIAL RESPONDED THAT RTG REAL CONCERN WAS THAT JOURNALISTS WOULD INTERVIEW INDOCHINA REFUGEES AND PRINT STORIES CRITICAL OF COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THAILAND CURRENTLY SEEKING IMPROVED RELATIONS. HE ADDED THAT "THREAT" BY NEWSWEEK REPORTERS TO CRITICIZE THAILAND IN PRINT FOR BARRING JOURNALISTS CONSTITUTED IMPROPER BEHAVIOUR. JENSEN PROCEEDED ON HIS OWN TO LAMSING REFUGEE CAMP AND WAS ADMITTED BY THE LOCAL COMMANDER AFTER ASSURING HIM THAT

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PERMISSION TO ENTER WAS "ON THE WAY."

3. TWO DAYS LATER, AP BUREAU CHIEF WAS INFORMED BY ASST. DIRECTOR, MISPLACED PERSONS DIVISION, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, KAMON THAT OFFICIAL PERMISSION TO ENTER CAMP IN SONGKHLA COULD NOT BE GIVEN AT PRESENT TIME, BUT IF HE APPROACHED SONGKHLA GOVERNOR INFORMALLY HE WOULD PROBABLY BE ADMITTED. AP TEAM GOING TO

SONGKHLA THIS WEEKEND.

COMMENT - PRESS HAS NOT REACTED STRONGLY TO CLOSURE THUS FAR, PROBABLY BECAUSE ACCESS CONTINUES TO BE POSSIBLE EVEN THOUGH UNAPPROVED. EMBASSY CONTINUING TO EMPHASIZE TO RTG IMPORTANCE OF ACCESS OF US MEDIA TO CAMPS AS A MEANS OF FOCUSSING ATTENTION ON PLIGHT OF REFUGEES AND IMPROVING CLIMATE FOR INCREASED ACCEPTANCES. UNHCR ALSO WEIGHING IN, FYI, COLONEL KAMON INFORMED REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF UNHCR APRIL 5 THAT REAL REASON FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE WAS HENRY KAMM ARTICLE REPORTING Ubon GOVERNOR STATEMENT THAT HE HAD FORCIBLY REPATRIATED OVER 300 REFUGEES TO LAOS. END FYI.

WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

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Concepts: CENSORSHIP, REFUGEE CAMPS
Control Number: n/a
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Draft Date: 07 apr 1978
Decapton Date: 01 jan 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
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